

MAGNOLIA AVENUE VIADUCT  
Magnolia Avenue over U. S. Route 1 and 9  
Elizabeth  
Union County  
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-126

HAER  
NJ  
20-ELI,  
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
U. S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## MAGNOLIA AVENUE VIADUCT

HAER NO. NJ-126

HAER  
NJ  
20-ELI,  
15 -

Location:

Magnolia Avenue over U.S. Route 1 and 9  
Elizabeth  
Union County  
New Jersey

UTM Coordinates: 18.567210.4501800  
USGS Quad: Elizabeth, NJ-NY, 1:24,000

Date of Construction:

1934

Engineer, etc.:

New Jersey State Highway Department

Present Owner:

New Jersey Department of Transportation

Present Use:

Vehicular and pedestrian bridge

Significance:

The bridge has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places due to its association with the Route 1 & 9 construction campaign during the 1920s and 1930s. Routes 1 & 9 were to serve as a viaduct-based superhighway that would connect the Holland Tunnel and carry traffic from New York to Washington, D.C.

Project Information Statement:

A proposed transportation project will result in demolition of the bridge. To mitigate the adverse effect, the State Historic Preservation Office stipulated documentation of the Magnolia Avenue Viaduct. This documentation was undertaken to fulfill this stipulation.

Nancy Van Dolsen  
Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc.  
101 N. Pennsylvania Avenue, P.O. Box 482  
Centre Hall, PA 16828

### Summary Description of Bridge and Setting

This viaduct carries Magnolia Avenue over Route 1 & 9 in the City of Elizabeth, Union County. The viaduct is located within a densely developed residential and commercial area of the city. The viaduct was constructed in 1934 by the New Jersey State Highway Department (now the New Jersey Department of Transportation) to carry local traffic over a limited access highway.

The bridge is a six-span, concrete beam and concrete encased I-beam structure. The superstructure measures 219'6" in length and has six spans measuring (from west to east): 28'7", 29'9", 51'3", 51'3", 29'9" and 28'8". A 3½" bituminous concrete covers the deck. The 8½" concrete deck slab is supported by five concrete incased I-beams. The width of the deck is 30'6" with a 22' roadway, a 5'5" sidewalk, and a 10" safety walk on the south side. The balustrades are 42" high and are 1'0" wide on the north side and 1'3" wide on the south side. The piers are reinforced concrete columns. The bridge is a neoclassical-style structure with linear design elements, including a pierced balustrade and simplified Doric-style piers.

### History of the Viaduct

Constructed in 1934, the Magnolia Avenue Viaduct was part of a greater plan to create a super highway from the Holland Tunnel to Washington, D.C. The catalyst for the plan was the coal and food shortages that developed during World War I due to congestion at the port of New York. The system at that time was to load goods in New York onto railroad cars that were ferried across the harbor to New Jersey to the railroad yards. Any increase in traffic would create difficulties due to a limited number of wharfs and ferries. To alleviate this problem, a vehicular tunnel between New York and New Jersey was conceived--the Holland Tunnel. The New Jersey State Highway Department (the predecessor to the New Jersey Department of Transportation) realized that roads would need to be able to handle the increase in traffic from the tunnel. The plan was to create a high volume, limited access highway with no local traffic stops and crossings.<sup>1</sup> The Route 1 Extension was designed as part of this plan and the majority of the roadway implemented between 1925 and 1932. Although the Magnolia Avenue Viaduct dates to 1934 it appears to have been part of the original design.<sup>2</sup>

A review of the Highway Department's annual reports for the years 1932 through 1935 revealed no reference to construction of the viaduct. Thus, information on individuals and firms

---

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Environmental Analysis, Summary Documentation for a Finding of Adverse Effect, Route 1 & 9, Magnolia Avenue Viaduct Removal Project, City of Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey (Trenton: New Jersey Department of Transportation, 1995) np.

<sup>2</sup>Tams Consultants, Inc. Historical Bridge Alternative Analysis for Magnolia Avenue Viaduct, City of Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey (Trenton: Department of Transportation, 1994) 2.

MAGNOLIA AVENUE VIADUCT  
HAER NO. NJ-126  
(Page 3)

associated with the viaduct is not available. The only alterations to the bridge involved the removal of the original asphalt block wearing surface in 1966 and the addition of a chain link fence to the concrete balustrade railing.

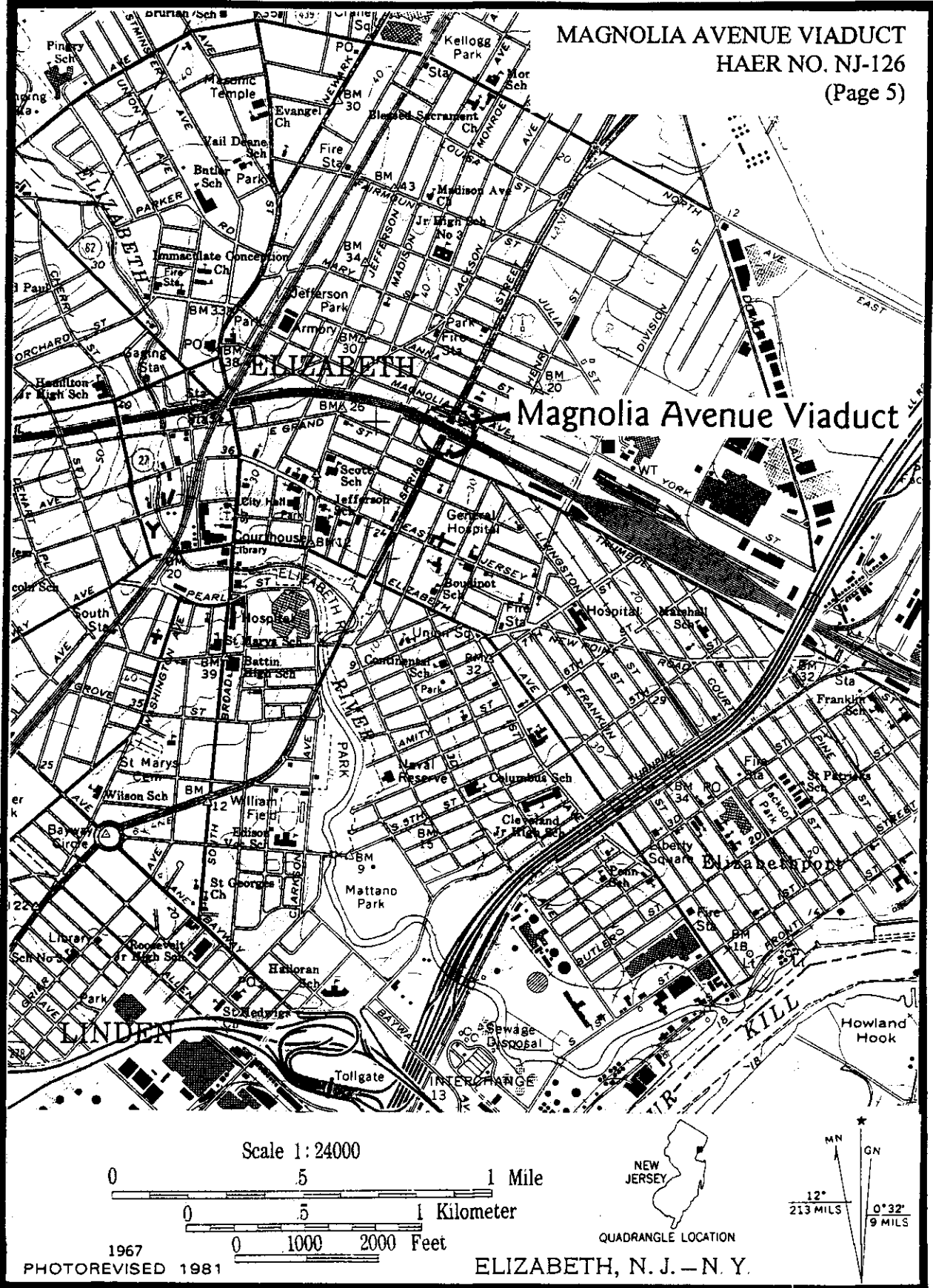
The Magnolia Avenue Viaduct will be removed and replaced with an at-grade signalized intersection.

Bibliography

Bureau of Environmental Analysis. Summary Documentation for a Finding of Adverse Effect, Route 1 & 9, Magnolia Avenue Viaduct Removal Project, City of Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey. Trenton: New Jersey Department of Transportation, 1995.

Tams Consultants, Inc. Historical Bridge Alternative Analysis for Magnolia Avenue Viaduct, City of Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey. Trenton: Department of Transportation, 1994.

MAGNOLIA AVENUE VIADUCT  
HAER NO. NJ-126  
(Page 5)



Scale 1:24000

0 5 1 Mile

0 5 1 Kilometer

0 1000 2000 Feet

1967  
PHOTOREVISED 1981

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ELIZABETH, N. J. — N. Y.